

Investigating the Cultural Differences in Perception of Relational Aggression and the Coping Skills of International Students in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

The current study involved a comprehensive examination of relational aggression and victimization across multiple cultural perspectives in the university setting in China. Patterns of results involve age, ethnicity, and gender differences were explored among university students. One hundred and seventy five male and one hundred and twenty four female students from across section of students from Europe, Asia, America, and Africa participated in this study. This study had three goals: (a) To investigate gender differences in relational aggression and victimization within young adults in university in China (b) to investigate associations between gender and culture and relational aggression and victimization (c) to explore coping responses of participants to relational and social victimization. This study examined gender cross cultural differences and similarities between socialization processes and how these relate to physical and relational and social victimization in students. There was a positive correlation between the two variables of culture and relational and social victimization where, $r = 0.137$, $n = 300$, $p = 0.17$. Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between culture and relational and social victimization. Different coping responses were adopted by the participants. Where 20% use planning, Support from others 28%, Denial 40%, while others use various other strategies.

Keywords

Relational Aggression; Social Victimization; Cultural Difference; Coping Skill

Introduction

In modern societies much attention has been paid to violence in learning institutions such as school massacre disasters, gun violence, hits, strikes and other antisocial behaviors which all aimed at inflicting harm to another person or persons. This has prompted the research on the development and effects of different

types of aggressive behavior among people in different societies. The focus of past research on aggression has primarily been on physical aggression such as hitting, pushing, kicking, forceful taking of objects, or the intent to hurt another individual using physical force or threat of physical harm.

However, recent research has focused on another form of aggression, relational and social victimization which is the act of inflicting harm through damage, threats, or control of relationships such as friendship (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The systematic study of relational aggression and other similar constructs like social and indirect aggression has generated important information regarding gender in the expression of aggression and the social psychological adjustment of individuals who engage in it. Moreover, substantial evidence is now available showing that children who engage in high levels of relational aggression are more likely to experience concurrent social, psychological, and emotional difficulties, such as peer rejection, depression and externalizing problems than non-relationally aggressive children (Crick et al., 1999).

Studying abroad away from one's native country exposes the student to many problems ranging from cultural, social, economic, psychological etc. Today's graduates of higher education abroad face an international multicultural world. Students studying in China or elsewhere are believed to experience some degree of psychological and cultural shock, coupled with adjusting to a new college life and accepting a new set of social values away from home. Students are entering an environment which will offer all kinds of challenges and opportunities for growth. The process of struggling to adapt to these considerable problems

in a new socio-cultural environment demands effective strategies for coping. Students would have to develop new ways to manage these psycho-cultural shocks to which they are exposed. There is need to clarify the nature of psycho-cultural shocks that the students have to withstand and the differences that exist in their perceiving and reacting to these problems.

Based on these claims therefore, this research intends to investigate relational and social victimization situations and coping information from foreign students in China in order to test the universal nature and coping behavior among them. The research is also aimed at providing basic information towards understanding the problems that result from relational aggression and coping which can best be defined in cultural terms. Specifically, this research focuses on differences in the magnitude of perceived relational aggression and the levels of coping skills practiced by these groups of International students in their respective universities in China.

The purpose of this study is to bring awareness to whether overseas international students in Chinese Universities perceive and cope with relational and social victimization in the same way. The study therefore aims at investigating relational and social victimization situations and coping skills from international students in China in order to test the universal nature and coping- among them. This paper also provides basic information for understanding the problems that result from relational aggression and coping as defined. Additionally to illustrate that relational aggression is a problem that is as prevalent and as critical as physical aggression and that school psychologists shall be expected to have a level of expertise about this issue and of preventive programs. Lastly to make recommendations to address the problem of relational aggression.

Research Method

Participants and Data Analysis

The participants under investigation were University students. The age ranges from 18 to 36 and more. The mean age is of 23.8. The sample size consists of 300 students, from Universities in Wuhan and Hangzhou. The questionnaires were distributed to all participants. They dealt directly with all issues effecting groups of students under this study. Most questionnaires were filled in by participants individually if the participant could understand English, if not research assistants

read out questions as a form of translation for the participant. A participant information form related to students' perceptions and experiences in the context of relational aggression and coping skills, other issues affecting their lives, and their coping strategies had been developed based on the literature review. Confidentiality of sensitive personal details was maintained. The researcher petitioned responses from the participants randomly in groups and as individuals. The researcher gave adequate time to explain and workshop the participants on the purpose of his study and a sufficient explanation of the questionnaire to all the participants.

Data analysis was conducted at Huazhong Normal University and Zhejiang University Hangzhou/China with data checking and consultation with supervision. The transcripts were read in order to generate key categories and then reviewed several times to ensure that concepts pertaining to the same phenomena were placed in the same category. A number of steps were taken to ensure a consistent analysis of the data, including the use of a comprehensive topic list, and a code-recode procedure conducted by the researcher. After coding the data, the same data was recorded weeks later and the results were compared. The statistical package for social science SPSS data analysis program and then deduced into tables and graphs as a way to explain them. Computer software (the SPSS program) was used to analyze the collected data. Ethical issues were followed, such as informing and requesting consent from the respondents and leadership. The researcher endeavored to make sure that the respondents were consenting of the research. It was also mandatory to keep all information confidential.

Assessments and Measures

A Demographic Questionnaire 16-item measures that included questions about the background information of each participant. This included questions pertaining to the respondent's age, current year in school, race etc. All of these were completed by the participants at the beginning of the study. The researcher used the Social Experience Questionnaire (SEQ: Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). Which is a 16-item measure developed specifically for the assessment of victims of relational aggression. The questionnaire has a 5-item analytically-derived subscale of relational aggression (e.g., 'how often do others tell you they won't like you unless you do what they say?'). This questionnaire asked respondents the frequency with which they have

received relationally aggressive behaviors from perpetrators. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never), 2 (little), 3 (sometimes), 4 (most of the time), 5 (all the time). Based on the response from the questionnaires, ANOVA will be used to test which gender and culture of the respondents have higher levels of relational aggression. The Self-report Coping Survey (SRCS; Causey & Dubow, 1992) a 34-item measure that assessed the degree to which victims of relational aggression utilize different coping strategies. The questionnaire had five factor- analytically derived subscales assessing coping strategies in relation to specific stressful situations provided by the researcher. Each item presented a specific coping response with a lead phrase describing a particular stressful situation. A respondent's score on each coping subscale was totaled of his\her responses to the items on a given subscale. Based on the responses from the questionnaire, ANOVA was used to determine whether there were significant differences in coping\reactions between foreign students from different countries in Chinese universities. ANOVA was used to analyze which gender showed higher levels of coping skills.

Results

There were five objectives for this study which included: the investigation of the relationship between gender and culture and relational and social victimization, to investigate whether gender and culture predicts relational and social victimization, to investigate the coping responses of participants to relational and social victimization, the investigation of the relationship between coping and relational and social victimization, and to investigate if coping responses can predict relational and social victimization. Frequencies of central tendency were computed and it was found that majority(57.7%) of the participants were in the age group of 18-25; 21% were in the age group of participants 26-30; 13% were in the age group of 31-35; and 25% were in the age group of 36 and more.

Relationship between Gender and Culture and Relational and Social Victimization

The Social Experience questionnaire on relational and social victimization was used for this study. It was found to have a reliability coefficient of .8848 on Cornbach's Alpha.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between culture and relational

and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=0.137$, $n=300$, $p=0.17$. Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between culture and relational and social victimization. The relationship between gender and relational and social victimization was computed. No significant correlation was discovered between the two variables where $r=-0.023$, $n=300$, $p=0.691$.

A linear regression was computed to predict the relationship between gender and relational and social victimization. Gender was found not to be a predictor of relational and social victimization, where $p=0.691$. A linear regression was computed to predict the relationship between culture and relational and social victimization. Culture was found to be a predictor of relational and social victimization, where $p=0.017$.

The Coping questionnaire was used for this study. It was found to have a reliability coefficient of 0.9132 on Cornbach's Alpha. Coping responses were calculated for the respondents and they included venting, self distraction worry, behavioral disengagement, religion, self blame, planning, support, denial, anger and active coping. It was found that respondents use planning 20% of the time, Support from others 28%, Denial 40%, while others use Anger 22%, Active Coping 28%, Venting 20%, Self Distraction 4%, Worry 16%, Behavioral Disengagement 8%, Religion 8%, Self Blame 20%. Both positive and negative forms of coping were used a great deal.

Independent t-test found the differences in means of the different coping responses and gender. Only support, denial and venting were found to have significance. Support $p=0.007$, Denial $p=0.01$, and venting $p=0.038$. Other variables did not have a strong statistical significance. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of culture on coping responses. There was a significant effect of culture $p<0.05$ level for the five continents [$F_{6.4}$, $p=.000$], [$F_{5.3}$, $p=.000$], [$F_{4.8}$, $p=.001$], [$F_{3.7}$, $p=.006$], [$F_{5.8}$, $p=.000$], [$F_{4.0}$, $p=.004$], [$F_{7.6}$, $p=.000$], [$F_{4.2}$, $p=.002$], [$F_{6.5}$, $p=.000$], [$F_{13.6}$, $p=.000$], [$F_{14.8}$, $p=.000$]. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey indicated that the mean score for the different continents was varied for each coping strategy as the table above indicates. Taken together, these results suggest that culture has an effect on coping strategies.

Correlations of Coping and Relational and Social Victimization

Table 1 shows Pearson correlation coefficient coping

strategies and relational and social victimization. No significant correlation was discovered between the two variables where $r=-1$, $n=300$, $p=0.106$. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between anger and relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=0.1$, $n=300$, $p=0.266(**)$. Overall, there was a correlation between anger and relational and social victimization. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between active coping and relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=0.123(*)$. Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between active coping and relational and social victimization. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between venting and relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=0.00$. Overall, there was a correlation between venting and relational and social victimization. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between self distraction as coping response and relational and social victimization. No significant correlation was discovered between the two variables where $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=0.033$. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between worrying and relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=0.160(**)$. Overall, there was a correlation between worry and relational and social victimization. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between behavioral disengagement relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=-0.249(**)$. Overall, there was a correlation between the two variables. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between religion and relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=0.140(*)$. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between planning as coping response and relational and social victimization. No significant correlation was discovered between the two variables where $r=-1$, $n=300$, $p=0.075$. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between support and relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=0.129(*)$. Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between culture and

relational and social victimization. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between self blame and relational and social victimization. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=1$, $n=300$, $p=0.252(**)$.

TABLE 1 CORRELATIONS OF COPING RESPONSES AND RELATIONAL AND SOCIAL VICTIMIZATION

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Planning	1	.194
RSV	1	.075
Support	1	.129 *
RSV	1	.025
Denial	1	.106
RSV	1	.066
Anger	1	.266 **
RSV	1	.000
Active Coping	1	.123 *
RSV	1	.034
Venting	1	.283 **
RSV	1	.000
Self Distraction	1	.033
RSV	1	.573
Worry	1	.160 **
RSV	1	.005
Behavioral Disengagement	1	-.249 **
RSV	1	.000
Religion	1	.140 *
RSV	1	.015
Self Blame	1	.252 **
RSV	1	.000

Relational and social victimization could not be predicted from planning as a coping response by the following: $p=0.194$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from support as a coping response by the following: $p=0.025$. Relational and social victimization could not be predicted from denial as a coping response by the following: $p=0.066$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from anger as a coping response by the following: $p=0.000$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from active coping as a coping response by the following: $p=.034$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from venting as a coping response

by the following: $p=0.000$. Relational and social victimization could not be predicted from self distraction as a coping response by the following: $p=0.573$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from worry as a coping response by the following: $p=0.005$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from behavioral disengagement as a coping response by the following: $p=0.000$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from religion as a coping response by the following: $p=0.015$. Relational and social victimization could be predicted from self blame as a coping response by the following: $p=0.000$.

Discussion

A similar study sought Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2006 and Lopez et al., 2002 to fill this gap in the research by reviewing the literature how cultural factors relate to and influence the nature of coping and resilience in college age students and young adults from various cultural groups. The research relied on self-reports of participant experiences. The same study indicates that the conceptual model suggests that socio-cultural aspects of support promote adaptive coping which in turn promotes insight earlier on in one's development history. This aspect of the model suggests that culture and cultural values can promote positive coping behavior among youth and young adults from diverse backgrounds who face an array of adversities. At the same time which is evident in this study, having a stressful experience may lead to adaptive or maladaptive coping. Future studies should explore whether closer sensitivity to cultures and their norms might provide reduced relational and social victimization.

Gender and Aggression

This study also provides evidence that gender doesn't play any significant role to deviant social behavior or relational and social victimization. However, when the research designs incorporated the various subtypes of aggression, it came to light that in terms of levels of aggression, there are hardly any differences between males and females (Crain, Finch & Foster, 2005). In other words, females may be just as aggressive as their male counterparts, but the quality or form of aggression differs (Loudin, Lukas & Robinson, 2003).

The literature tends to suggest that there is a higher rate of relational or indirect aggression in females and physical /direct aggression among males (Crick &

Grottpeter, 1995; James & Owens, 2005). In any case, the use of relational rather than physical aggression appears to be more socially acceptable in the 'girls' world', as it is often covert and the aggressor can remain unidentified (Owens et al., 2000; Richardson and Green, 1999). It is more socially acceptable because this type of 'communion-related' behavior is constantly with the female gender role, whereas physical aggression is more closely linked to the agency-related male gender role (Eagly, 1987). Crick (1997) found that girls who used this 'normative' form of aggression for their sex experienced less maladjustment than girls who used non normative forms of aggression, such as physical violence. Crick also found that the use of relational aggression by boys was perceived as a non normative form of aggression. It needs to be mentioned though that there have been studies where no gender effects were found for either indirect or overt aggression (Rys & Bear, 1997; Walker, Richardson & Green, 2000). This finding may partially explain why some children who engage in relationally aggressive behaviors are more at risk for deviant behaviors than other children are. Also, prior research has shown that girls perceive relational aggression to be more harmful than do boys or than physical aggression (Galen & Underwood, 1997). Thus, it is important to consider not only differences between males and females in victimization, but also how the different types of victimization occur within each gender and how each gender perceives the victimization. Overall, with a few exceptions, girls have been found to be just as relationally aggressive as boys or more relationally aggressive than boys, while boys are consistently found to be more overtly aggressive than girls (Crain et al., 2005).

This finding may also partially explain the 'queen bee' syndrome (Hadley, 2003) where girls with higher pro social behavior skills are able to use relational aggression more effectively.

Gender and Coping Strategies

Additionally, coping responses were calculated and were found to fit into eleven distinct categories. As indicated by the coping responses chosen in response to the victimization experience, coping patterns can be positive or negative based upon the individual's possession of coping skills. Because coping skills are learned responses and continue as a pattern into adulthood. An unexpected finding was that the denial of any relational and social victimization ranked the highest as a coping response. Predictably, use of

emotional and instrumental support and active coping followed as being most used coping mechanism. There was a difference in gender regarding support, denial, venting strategies of coping.

The issue of coping has been a popular topic among psychologists for several decades. Gender has been another concept that is frequently discussed in the literature on stress, coping and illness. Research on this issue has consistently demonstrated that women are more vulnerable than men to some types of stressful life events and are more likely to have worse psychological outcomes when they experience it. Furthermore, research has also indicated that coping behavior varies by gender and that it may play an important role in explaining the differential impact of stressful events on men and women (Thoits, 1995). Despite the research that has been done, the issue of gender and coping is one where many issues remain unresolved, just like the case of this research. In particular, research in this area has been limited by various conceptual and methodological problems including an inadequate conceptualization of gender. This finding is in contrast to other studies that demonstrate that boys with lower emotion regulation are more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression (Eisenberg et al., 2001 and Gottman et al., 1996). It is important to note that the present study was cross-sectional, meaning that results can only be interpreted as correlational and direction of causality cannot be determined.

Relational and Social Victimization and Coping Strategies

The researcher examined the relation between victimization by relational aggression and various coping variables (i.e., religion, anger, denial, behavioral disengagement etc.) Correlational analyses found that relational and social victimization is positively correlated with support, anger, active coping, venting, worry, religion and negatively correlated to behavioral disengagement, and self blame. While no correlation was discovered with planning, denial, self distraction. Linear regression calculations found similar results with the following variables of support, anger, active coping, venting, worry, behavioral disengagement, religion, and self blame had predictive significance and these variables did not planning, denial, self distraction. Research has suggested that if it is not dealt with effectively, chronic interpersonal stress impacts coping ability will place an increased demand

on coping abilities leading to a depletion of coping resources and resulting in maladaptive outcomes. Coping strategies have long been known to moderate the effects of stressful experiences (e.g., Billings & Moos, 1981 and Garmezy & Rutter, 1983). There is also a considerable literature that indicates that some coping strategies are more maladaptive than others. For example, disengagement methods of coping such as denial, wishful thinking, cognitive and behavioral avoidance, and self-blame are associated with poorer adjustment in response to a wide range of stressful events in both children and adults (for reviews see Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001, Zeidner & Endler, 1996). Given the negative effects of disengagement coping strategies, it is important to identify who may be at greater risk of using them. Although individuals will often vary in the coping strategies they use depending on the circumstances they are facing, it is also true that when confront with the same type of stressful event there are major individual differences in the coping strategies employed. To date, there has not been much prior research on the origins of individual differences in coping strategies. The little research that has been completed in this area has primarily focused on the influence of personality dispositions (e.g., Bolger, 1990; Costa, Somerfield, & McCrae, 1996; Krohne, 1996; Watson, David, & Suls, 1999). Finally, some researchers have suggested that in the face of multiple stressors, effective coping resources and behaviors become depleted and more maladaptive coping strategies dominate (e.g., Baumeister, Faber, & Wallace, 1999; Hobfoll, Freedy, Green, & Solomon, 1996). Baumeister et al. (1999) further suggest that the act of coping itself, rather than the repeated stressors in isolation, can exhaust psychological resources needed for effective coping. Literature has categorized coping mechanisms according to their engagement with the risk, while engaging with a risk includes trying to work it out through emotion expression or rumination and disengaging includes removing oneself from the situation as with denial, and wishful thinking. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) stressed the importance of viewing coping within a specific context. Thus, in the future it would be helpful to add these time qualifiers to increase accuracy in measurement as well as measure coping with recent victimization versus ongoing victimization. The present study is the first of its kind to examine in what ways university students in Wuhan University cope with relational and social

victimization. Prior research has shown that relational and social victimization is associated with poor adjustment and that the presence of close, supportive, non-aggressive friends can act as a buffer against the negative impact of this victimization.

Research is needed to tap into the different responses so that the respondents who are at risk can be taught strategies to build their support structure once faced with this experience. In addition, more longitudinal work is needed to build the science and establish this victimization experience as one that requires policy changes the way we treat this phenomena.

Limitations

Several limitations must also be discussed when considering the present findings. First, because the study required that participants to reflect back on their experiences, perceptions of past events may have been subject to distortions of memory. Gathering the large sample size was an obstacle during this research. Since this research involved a cross cultural population it was a challenge to find willing participants. Later to collect the questionnaires without sample bias may have been another obstacle. An additional limitation was the language differences of the participants. This study dealt with individuals from various countries and diverse language backgrounds. This made it mandatory for the researcher to translate the instruments of measurement or have an interpreter available for translation. Lastly; the cost of conducting such a large scale study was an obstacle for the researcher.

Future Directions

Future research in this area needs to explore further the finding that culture may be a risk factor for relational and social victimization. It would be helpful to know if other variables such level of education and socio economic status affect relational and social victimization. In addition, replication of the finding that pro-social behavior mediates the relationship between relational aggression and deviant behaviors is recommended. Future directions should develop and employ the use of an individual cultural inventory. This is to investigate whether the participants are of a multi-cultural background for example the case of third culture kids and adults or global nomads. The term 'global nomad' is used to describe 'a person of any age or nationality who has lived a significant part of his or her developmental years in one or more countries outside his or her passport country because

of a parent's occupation' (Schaetti, 1998). Living a transient lifestyle may predispose TCKs or global nomads to not feel at home in their 'home' culture (Useem and Downie, 1976) – if they, in fact, feel that they have a 'home' culture. The complex nature of TCK relationships may cause children to feel they relate to many cultures, but lack a sense of belonging to any specific culture (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001). For some TCKs, a sense of belonging is more relationship-based rather than geography-based, as they experience a common bond with other IM people like themselves (Langford, 1998; Pollock and Van Reken, 2001). This will eliminate any errors or bias in answers from the subjects. This study indicates that relational and social victimization exists in Chinese Universities. Therefore it recommends that these Universities provide counseling for victims of relational and social victimization. Additionally, it is evident that a lack of positive or adaptive coping strategies might be a risk factor for relational and social victims to develop and that avoidant coping styles such as denial are rampant in diverse cultural settings. However, more research is needed in this area to determine other mediating variables. Early adulthood (as was the case for the majority of our participants) is a time of many transitions, and although most adults move successfully through the developmental tasks of being in a new culture some adults lack the necessary skills and support systems to master these to change. The ability to regulate one's emotions is also a critical developmental task, starting with infancy and remaining throughout adolescence (Cole, Michel, & Teti, 1994). The results of this study emphasize the importance of developing support systems to assist University students. Finally, practical applications of this study should be concerned with how researchers, clinicians, policy makers and others can look to cultural resources that promote adaptive coping and insight. Questions include: What protective factors exist within the community? What sources of support are these individuals exposed to and how can it be increased? Comprehensive interventions that maximize protective factors and decrease stress are important to help individuals be less vulnerable to relational and social victimization. It is important that practitioners do not treat relational aggression as a normal developmental behavior.

Conclusions

The coming of foreign students to Chinese universities from different parts of the world is mainly due to

intercultural exchange through well designed intercultural educational exchange programs. Intercultural programs are a form of multicultural and diversity education, described as the proactive and action-oriented aspect of a phenomenon that teaches people to interact and communicate effectively and appropriately with ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, and other differences (Fantini, 2000). Intercultural education programs teach people to respect, celebrate, recognize and appreciate diversity in all parts of human life.

Even though these two dimensions of aggression are almost always positively correlated, numerous studies have supported their distinctions. Crick for example, found independent associations between relational aggression and the indices of social adjustment. Engaging in relationally aggressive behavior was associated with peer rejection, loneliness, and depression in both genders and with low pro-social behavior in girls. In other studies, relational aggression was associated with high levels of exclusivity, intimacy and the use of relational aggression within friendship, whereas Overt aggression was associated with low levels of friendship, intimacy and using overt aggression against children outside of friendship groups. (Grotzinger & Crick, 1996).

The learner is sensitized that people are different in many ways and these differences benefit the society at large (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). As hypothesized, the relationship between culture and relational and social victimization was found to be significant. Culture was a significant predictor for relational aggression. This finding is extremely important as it is the first evidence of a relationship between these two variables. It is evident from the literature that relational aggression is a common behavior, particularly among school-aged and adolescent girls (Bonica et al., 2003; Crick & Grotzinger, 1995; Lagerspetz et al., 1988), but is the first to be seen in this given context. What has not been clear in prior research is whether relational aggression and social victimization are a path to deviant social behaviors. Particularly with regard to direct and indirect aggression, it is important to take note of the relational domain within which such an interaction takes place, as this provides the context, or frame, according to which the aggressive act will be identified, interpreted, and experienced (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004).

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